





super

CREEP

**What kind of a tosser describes himself as “a synopsis of thought”? Only the first true star in ages to emerge from that glamour-desert indie-rock. Step forward Thom Yorke of Radiohead. One day the whole world shall fear your name...**

He's a creep. He's a weirdo. What the hell is Thom Yorke doing here? Saving indie rock from the clutches of no-personality doom of course

**T**HAT'S GREAT. IT STARTS WITH AN EARTHQUAKE. “First of all I wanted to be Brian May.” Uh-oh! “I went into a guitar lesson when I was eight and said, I wanna be a pop star...”

I've just asked Thom Yorke, aged 24, singer with Radiohead, if he's in this to be a star, because it's odds-on that he's about to become one, and the answer is a very definite, resounding yes.

“I'd never really wanted to do anything else. Before that it was Lego.”

IAN MCCULLOCH GOT IT RIGHT. “STARS ARE STARS and they shine so hard”. And Jesus, he should know. Thom Yorke, born in Oxford, lazy eye, ex-stude, pop star designate, had us all on the edge of our seats last September. It was Radiohead's second single, ‘Creep’, that did it. Exhibits A, B and C.

The promise of this essentially slippery five-piece at that stage lay only in some sparky live support slots and a much-ignored debut, the ‘Drill

EP’. They were signed to Parlophone, so *someone* had eyed potential in the largely unimpressive-looking glop of Thames Valley fashion detritus – but it was ‘Creep’ that turned the tide for the rest of us. The shining starts here.

Leaving aside its artful use of the word “*fucking*” (a bugbear, as it turned out, since the specially-adapted ‘radio edit’ replaced it with a less-contentious “*very*” and the critics sneered) and its stunningly simple two-tiered tune for guitars, ‘Creep’ set about its business of capturing hearts with its deadly, self-mocking lyric. “*I’m a creep/I’m a weirdo/What the hell am I doing here?/I don’t belong here*” went the chorus, Thom beating out this refrain on his chest, the words forming a crown of thorns perched atop two verses that tenderly worship some coveted beauty and lament the author’s own defects. Our own, in fact. “*I want a perfect body/I want a perfect soul/I want you to notice/When I’m not around*” – ouch!

Even taken at face value, as singalong anthem for the ordinary and the dispossessed, it is a glorious addition to rock’s canon. Unlike US grunge’s knack for whining and pining, Radiohead’s urban restlessness comes complete with an in-built anger, a defiance, a worm-that-turned positivity and aspiration that lends their as yet category-hostile noise a breadth that kills. ▶

story by ANDREW COLLINS

photos by DAVID TONGE



And there was the finger. One of their earliest photo shoots – from May, last year – ought to have told us all that we needed to know about Radiohead. The rest of the band look like Chapterhouse lettuce-leaves, but Thom leans towards the camera, head shaved, face scrunched, and gives the whole world the middle finger. CRASH! What a picture. BANG! What a star. WALLOP! What a catalyst he turned out to be...

PARLOPHONE SIGNED THREE ACTS IN 1992. THE Sundays (already proven), Stephen Duffy (wandering about lost, alright then *we'll* sign him if you're not going to) and Radiohead (*Radiowho?*). While the band gigged hard, Thom screwing up audiences with petulant stageside manner, the record company put out two EPs. In February the 'Anyone Can Play Guitar' single bust the Top 40 and the band's debut album, 'Pablo Honey', vaulted the 30 three weeks later. Avuncular antipodean broadcaster Clive James tried to get on the Camden Underworld guest list at the end of their 34-date tour in March!

QED: the big time is Radiohead's for the taking. Which begs the \$64,000 question: Is Thom Yorke up to the job? He's gamely growing his hair, right, good start, but does he have what the old *New Faces* panel used to call Star Quality? Well...

When asked to supply a brief explanatory blurb to accompany 'Thinking About You' (their track on last month's free EMI/Q CD) Radiohead forewent the required, "It's two o'clock in the morning, I'm in a hotel room in Missouri, two bottles of Corona put me in a melancholic mood..." (thanks, Mike Edwards) and wrote, simply, "A star is born".

Our star, that rare beast the emergent star of indie rock, was born in 1969. He was writing songs at 13. A self-confessed "Oxbridge reject" Thom went to college in Exeter to study art and English. He loved reading but hated writing about it.

"Most of my essays came to the conclusion: It's useless studying this work, who needs it? Matthew Arnold said literature was the new religion, and going to university and studying it means you worship these great works, which is a load of wank."

His favourite word is "autonomous", he digs *Paradise Lost*, and he doesn't like Wednesdays, because Wednesday is music press day.

"I spend most of the day recovering from what they've written, and it's ridiculous."

OK, so he's sensitive, he's smart and, better than that, he's a regular sourpuss.

"Yeah, there seems to be quite a fad for that at the moment, and I guess I fit into it – but you can't base a career on being miserable. You can't sustain it and mean it, it becomes a mannerism."

Are you a Paul McCartney or a Keith Moon?

"If I come out like McCartney I'll have to top myself. No, I'll end up being me, only more arrogant. And my temper will get worse. I read an old Lester Bangs interview with Lou Reed and I thought, Sounds a bit familiar."

If the drugs and the drink were there, would you indulge?

"I indulge only if I've got nothing to do for the next week. When we first signed we hadn't a clue what we were about. So we went out on the road, and I shaved all my hair off and got really drunk every night, smoked too much, we had to cancel loads of gigs. I hit the self-destruct button pretty quickly."

How vain are you about your looks?

"Very. How you look is fucking important. I've always been like that. For years I was really into suits from Oxfam, I grew my hair really long, dyed it blond, I was the New Romantic when New Romantic went out of fashion. I went really, really



Heads together! Cheese! Make love to the camera! The 'Head, May '92: (from left) Phil, Ed, Thom, Jon, Colin

thin at college, started wearing thin clothes. Then I got fat cos I drank too much.

"I love that sensation when you walk into a room and everyone looks at you twice. That's great. Pure vanity, you're there for effect. When I went to art college it was the first time in my life that I'd ever been with people who did the same thing as me, they'd dress up for effect, get on a bus for effect."

Ah yes, art school. Eno, Lennon, Murphy, Barrett, Ant, Puttnam – the nation's life drawing classes and screenprint workshops have always been abuzz with pop star potential in smocks and daft haircuts. So what were Thom's paintings like?

"Big. I was into Francis Bacon, so it was all red, white and black. The only good painting I did in the first year was this guy blowing his brains out. In the second year I got into taking 16th century Italian paintings and ripping them off."

"I was really lazy and I didn't like getting all

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messed up, so when my college bought all these computers I was in heaven. I just stole images and fucked about with them, smudged them. I became this *ideas* person. For my degree show I scanned the whole of the Sistene Chapel into the hard disc, changed all the colours and called it my own. Gave it away as photocopies. I got a 2:1."

Are you monogamous?

"I hope so."

Were you ever much of a fan?

"Oh yeah. REM. The Blue Aeroplanes. Five Thirty. My current faves are Moonshake, Molly Half Head and Strangelove."

"Anyone Can Play Guitar' was a false cursor. Because people thought I was exploring the deep, meaningful side to being a pop star, and there isn't one. You become an icon for a generation, you become a synopsis of thought."

I give you Thom Yorke, every inch the pouting, peroxide synopsis of thought. Creep, weirdo and thoroughly modern radiohead for your blooming generation.

"I want nothing more in the whole world than to be a star. Nothing more. That's it. Period." ☐

## IN SEARCH OF TRANSIT VANITY...

We put the indie VIPs through their paces and mark them out of five for star quality



### LOZ FROM KINGMAKER

One-time specy geek indebted to parents for lodging reinvents himself as Michael Caine in *Alfie* with added suicide and wing-mirror fixation.

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### FRUITBAT

Chirpy, unshaven flirt with cyclist's legs, rodent's grin and lunatic's headwear; as much star quality as your wacky uncle.

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### JONN FROM THE NEDS

Amplly-chinned semi-detached Midlander with flyaway mop and niceboy bus-stop charm but nil discernible pizzazz; a quite tall Neds fan.

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### LESLEY RANKINE

Silverfish's proto Riot Grrrr!™ boasts well-turned boy-frightening demeanour, bags of onstage abandon and fuck-off boots to boot.

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### RACHEL SLOWDIVE

Epitome of convent cool, Ms Thames Valley 1991 exudes full complement of now-discredited shoegazing traits: fey, likeable, demure (zzzzz!).

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### CASS

Perhaps the Senseless Thing, wears curled-lip Dixons Saturday boy insolence like second-hand coat; your-mate-in-the-band incarnate.

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### DAMON ALBARN

Blur frontman belies naff Colchester precinct roots with pogo-exuberance, pro drinksmanship and tendency to annoy drummer onstage.

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### CARL PUTTNAM

Rud's affable, frizzy-haired chest-beating vocal acrobat minted '70s retro chic and now carries Crimpenist mantle with much *elan*.

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### JARVIS COCKER

Unlikely beanpole sex god with no tangible hairstyle brings to bear own brand of arch irony and style to tales of sexual deviance in north.

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### PIROT OF ADORABLE

Coventry-raised show-off risks *Randall & Hopkirk* suit and exotic spell-change gambit but ultimately falls at 'trying too hard' fence

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